

# Durrington War Graves



*Lest we Forget*

## World War I



**2619 PRIVATE**

**L. O'NEALE**

**39TH BN. AUSTRALIAN INF.**

**6TH FEBRUARY, 1917 Age 21**

*We Long For One*

*We Loved So Well*

*And The Smile*

*Of A Lad That Is Gone*

*Commonwealth War Graves Headstone for Pte L. O'Neale is located in Grave Plot # 180  
of Durrington War Graves Cemetery*

## Leslie O'Neale

Leslie O'Neale was born at Carlton, Melbourne in 1896 to parents James and Clara O'Neale. He was a 20 year old, single, Farm Labourer from Brocklesby, NSW when he enlisted on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1916 with the 39<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements of the Australian Army (A.I.F.). His service number was 2619 & his religion was Church of England. His next of kin was listed as his father – James O'Neale of Brocklesby, NSW. As Leslie O'Neale was under the age of 21 years, both parents signed as consent for their son to enlist for active service abroad.

Pte Leslie O'Neale embarked from Sydney on HMAT *Benalla* (A24) on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1916 & disembarked at Devonport, England on 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1917.

Reinforcements were only given basic training in Australia. Training was completed in training units in England. Some of these were located in the Salisbury Plain & surrounding areas in the county of Wiltshire.

Private Leslie O'Neale was marched in to 10<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion, Durrington, Wiltshire from Australia on 10<sup>th</sup> January, 1917.

Private Leslie O'Neale was admitted to Fargo Military Hospital, Wiltshire on 1st February, 1917.

Private Leslie O'Neale died at 1.30 p.m. on 6<sup>th</sup> February, 1917 at Fargo Military Hospital, Wiltshire from Broncho Pneumonia.

A death for Leslie O'Neil, aged 20, was registered in the March quarter, 1917 in the district of Amesbury, Wiltshire.

The Red Cross Missing & Wounded File for Pte Leslie O'Neale contains a request from the Red Cross of behalf of the family of Pte O'Neale, to Fargo Military Hospital asking for particulars of his death & burial. A reply was written 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1917 by E. M. Bowes, Assistant Matron for Matron, Fargo Military Hospital, which reads:

*"He was admitted to hospital on 1.2.17 very ill and died on 6.2.17 from broncho pneumonia, he was buried at Durrington, Salisbury Plain on 10.2.17. Grave no 180 on right hand side of cemetery path. The chaplain officiating was the Rev. Justice. Please convey to the relatives of Pte O'Neil our deepest sympathy."*

Private Leslie O'Neale was buried on 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1917 at Durrington Cemetery, Wiltshire – Plot number 180 and has a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

Pte Leslie O'Neale was entitled to British War Medal only as he had not entered a Theatre of War. A Memorial Scroll & Memorial Plaque were also sent to Pte O'Neale's father – Mr James O'Neale (sent December, 1921 & July, 1922)

Private L. O'Neale is commemorated in the Hall of Memory Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia on Panel 131.



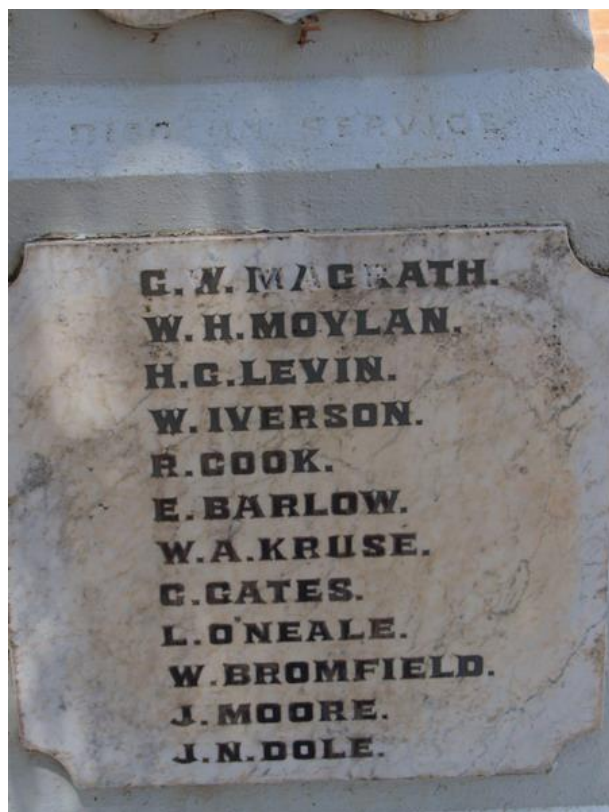
(Photos by Cathy Sedgwick)



*Roll Of Honour WW1 Australian War Memorial Canberra, Australia*

L. O'Neal is also remembered on the Brocklesby War Memorial located outside the Brocklesby School of Arts at Howlong Road, Brocklesby, NSW.





**Brocklesby War Memorial** (Photos from Register of War Memorials in NSW)

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission lists Private Leslie O'Neale – service number 2619 as being 21 years old & served with 39th Battalion Australian Infantry. He was the son of James and Clara O'Neale of Berrimore, New South Wales. Born at Melbourne.

(46 pages of Pte Leslie O'Neale's Service records are available for On Line viewing at National Archives of Australia website).

*Information obtained from the CWGC, Australian War Memorial (Roll of Honour, First World War Embarkation Roll, Red Cross Wounded & Missing) & National Archives*

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## Newspaper Reports

CASUALTIES – 273<sup>rd</sup> LIST

NEW SOUTH WALES

DIED OF ILLNESS

Pte L. O'Neale, Brocklesby

(*The Land*, Sydney – Friday 23 February, 1917)

## ROLL OF HONOUR

O'NEALE.-Died Fargo Military Hospital Salisbury Plains, of pneumonia, February 6, 1917, Private Leslie O'Neale aged 21 years, much loved son of C. and J. O'Neale, loved brother of Dorothy, Myrtle, Vera, and Jimmy.

Beloved in life, regretted, gone;  
Remembered in the grave.

*(The Sydney Morning Herald, NSW – Tuesday 27 February, 1917)*

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## DEATHS.

O'NEALE.— On the 6th of February, 1917, at Fargo Military Hospital, Salisbury Plains, of pneumonia, Private Leslie O'Neale, aged 21 years all but six days, much loved son of Jas. and C. O'Neale, loved brother of Jimmy, Dorothy, Myrtle and Vera.

He freely offered life and all  
In answer to his country's call;  
Far away from those that loved him,  
In a hero's grave he's sleeping;  
Resting in peace with God,  
One of the bravest, one of the best.

*(Albury Banner and Wodonga Express, NSW – Friday 30 March, 1917)*

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## ROLL OF HONOR

O'NEALE. — In sad, but loving memory of our dear son and brother, Pte. Leslie O'Neale, 39th Batt., died February 6, 1917, Fargo Hospital, Salisbury Plains, of pneumonia, aged 21 years. Beloved son of J. and C. O'Neale.

The bravest oft are first to fall,  
The strongest, first to fade,  
The loving, dearest, best of all,  
Within the grave are laid.  
Do not ask us if we miss him,  
There is such a vacant place,  
Ever listening for his footsteps,  
And his dear familiar face.  
God will link the broken chain  
Closer when we meet again.

-Inserted by his sorrowing parents.

*(The Border Morning Mail and Riverina Times, Albury, NSW – Wednesday 6 February, 1918)*

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## IN MEMORIAM

### ROLL OF HONOUR

O'NEALE - In sad, but over, loving remembrance of our dear son and brother, Pte Leslie O'Neale, 39th Battalion (died February 6/2/17, military hospital, Salisbury Plains, of pneumonia, Aged 21 years. Loved son of J. and C. O'Neale.

Two years have passed. How long it seems  
In all my thoughts his face still beams,  
In memory's page we'll never blot,  
Three little words 'Forgot him not!'  
Away on a lonely plain  
Beneath a lonely sod  
Lies our darling Les, sleeping,  
Resting in peace with God.

Inserted by his sorrowing parents.

*(The Border Morning Mail and Riverina Times, Albury, NSW – Thursday 6 February, 1919)*

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### BROCKLESBY SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL.

On Wednesday the proceedings at the site of the monument were most impressive, and will long be remembered by all who participated in them.

The township was bedecked with flags, and as the visitors motored up to the scene they fluttered in the breeze as if to wave a hearty welcome. In front of the School of Arts was a framework of flags and greenery, which partly enclosed a draped object. A large concourse of people awaited the commencement of the ceremony. Presently the sound of music in the distance heralded the approach of the procession from the railway station headed by the Border Brass Band, under the baton of Mr. R. J. Beaman. A large squad of returned soldiers in uniform followed the band, and in the rear was a big following of Red Cross and War Chest ladies, in white uniforms. Immediately preceding the band were Messrs. Jacob Levin, J. A. Hogan, and W. Ross, three gentlemen who had undertaken the lion's share of the work.

Mr Hogan who acted as chairman called on the Hon. R. T. Ball, Minister for Works and Railways, to perform the unveiling ceremony.

Mr. Ball: "It is my duty, on behalf of this community, to unveil this monument to the memory of those who paid the supreme sacrifice, and also to those who fought for us to bring, about the victory which we have celebrated." Drawing aside the flag which covered the monument, he exposed it to the view of those present, and the following names of those who paid the supreme sacrifice, carved in the stone, were draped in purple and black: —

"Died on Service."

C. W. Magrath	W. A. Kruse
W. H. Moylan	C. Gates
H. G. Levin	L. O'Neale
W. Iverson	W. Bromfield

R. Cook  
E. Barlow

J. Moore  
J. N. Dole

The band played 'The Dead March' in 'Saul' while the assemblage stood with bared heads. Mr. Ball, continuing, said on an occasion like this the, natural question to consider was: What is our duty to those boys who went forth to preserve our privileges here? When they realised what it had meant to us as part of the British nation; when they realised what it meant for the future they must admit their obligations to those boys and realise that they cannot do too much for those who have been fortunate enough to return. The people of Brocklesby had done their part for the successful prosecution of the war, and now could all rejoice that the war was over and we are assured of peace for all time. These were, the conditions which existed owing to the grand work done by the soldiers who went to the front, and in which Brocklesby played no mean part. Unfortunately some had paid the supreme sacrifice, and were unable to rejoice with us, but their memory would be treasured for all time; although they would not be with us again, their relatives would realise that they had done a great work for the national question, and our obligation to them was to recognise what they had done. We had a peace which was duly signed by the great Powers, but what of our own internal peace? We were hoping for a peace which is to be a perfect peace, and much depended on the way in which we conduct our own affairs, and we must strive for a peace for our own country. Although the war was over, it had left important problems in its train, the most important of which was repatriation. The Government recognised that the obligation rests, not only on the Government, but on the people, to see that the men who fought were repatriated. The Government of New South Wales had already spent £2,079,000 in repatriation work, and was anxious to assist men to take up land. He believed 99 per cent, of the people were prepared to do something for the boys, and he asked them to realise that whatever rights and privileges they possessed were due to the fact that the war had been successful through what the boys had done. We were left to work out our own salvation, and he was sure the whole of the Commonwealth were prepared to admit that their destinies were safer under the British flag than under any other flag in the world. (Applause.) The speaker concluded by saying that the service that afternoon was an indication that the people of that district were recognising what the boys had done and were perpetuating their memory for all time.

The band then played 'The Rosary' after which the Rev. Mr. Goodman delivered an address. His worship the mayor of Corowa (Ald. W. H. Parkin) expressed pleasure at being present to do honor to the boys of the district who had put up such a grand fight for their country. He also congratulated the Brocklesby ladies on the noble work they had done during the war, and also the town on having erected such a fine monument. He paid a warm tribute to the sterling worth of the secretary of the movement (Mr J. Levin), and was very sorry that owing to ill health that gentleman had to leave the district.

The Rev. Mr. Wyles, Ald. G. W. Daniel, of Albury, and Mr. J. P. Taylor, Grand Secretary of the M.U.I.O.O.F., also delivered addresses, after which the Hon. R.T. Ball made an appeal on behalf of the committee for funds with which to complete the monument by fencing it in and concreting the sides. In answer to this appeal, the following donations were received :— Hon. R. T. Ball, £1/1/ ; Mr. P.O. Sullivan £1/1/; Manchester Unity I.O.O.F. (Brocklesby Lodge), £5; the Mayor of Corowa (Ald. W. H. Parkin), £1/1/ ; Mrs. Banks, £1/1/ ; Mr. Greenfield, £1/1/ ; Mr. G. Lindner, 10/6; Ald. Daniels (Albury), £1/1/; Mr. F. W. Tietyens (Albury), £1/1/ ; Mr. N. Azzi, £1/1/ ; Mr. H. Collis (Walbundrie). 10/6; Mr. C. Dunstan, .10/6; Sinda Singh, 10/6; Mr. Houtan, 10/6; Mr. W. H. George, £1/1/ ; Mr.M. Lee. 5/ ; Mr. A. C. Severin, 10/ ; anonymous. £1/1/.

“The Last Post” was sounded by bandsmen, and a firing party fired their salutes over the monument, after which the national anthem was rendered by all. Mr. Hogan brought the ceremony to a close by thanking the Border Brass Band for attending that day: also the Hon. R.T. Ball, the ladies for their splendid work, and the general public for their attendance and donations to the function. The monument, he said, was costing over £100, which had all been subscribed by voluntary contributions. In addition to the names of those who paid the supreme sacrifice, quoted above, the following appear on the monument as having served : —H. Eastick, O. Bromfield, P. Connors, C. Howard, A. Walsh, H. D. Howard, M. Merkel, L. Mason, O. Price, E. Moylan, L. C. Stewart, J. P. Moylan, S. Rose, E. Hicks, J. M'Grath, D. Fowler, H. Dickenson, C. Dick, E. Lees, J. Morrison, P. Carton. E. Ziebarth, A. Welsh, N. Hall, O. Dodd, E. Pollard.

The monument, which is of cement mounted on two tiers of steps, is a very substantial structure, and of nice design. On the top is an iron frame which carries a cluster of electric lamps, and as it is placed immediately in front of the hall, is a very worthy addition to the fixtures of the town. Inside the hall the ladies served excellent refreshments, the proceeds being devoted to the funds of the monument.

*(Albury Banner and Wodonga Express, NSW – Friday 8 August, 1919)*

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#### Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstones

The Defence Department, in 1920/21, contacted the next of kin of the deceased World War 1 soldiers to see if they wanted to include a personal inscription on the permanent headstone at Durrington War Graves Cemetery. Space was reserved for 66 letters only (with the space between any two words to be counted as an additional letter) & the rate per letter was around 3 ½ d (subject to fluctuation).

The expense in connection for the erection of permanent headstones over the graves of fallen soldiers was borne by the Australian Government.

*(Information obtained from letters sent to next of kin in 1921)*

Pte L. O'Neale does have a personal inscription on his headstone.

*We Long For One We Loved So Well And The Smile Of A Lad that Is Gone*



Photo of Pte L. O'Neale's Headstone at Durrington War Graves Cemetery, Wiltshire.



(Photo © Ian King - with permission)